Building the Road to Alaska

by John T. Greenwood

Today colorful travel brochures beckon tourists to drive the modern two-lane Alaska Highway from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, through the scenic Canadian Rocky Mountains and the historic Yukon, and on to Fairbanks and the natural wonders of Alaska—a distance of 1,500 miles. Before Japanese carrier aircraft devastated the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, no such highway existed nor was it likely to exist in the near future. But soon after Pearl Harbor, fears of the Pacific Northwest's vulnerability to Japanese attack prompted leaders in Washington and Ottawa to approve the emergency construction of a highway to Alaska. With the U.S. Pacific Fleet crippled and Canadians defending the British Commonwealth almost everywhere else but in western North America, a secure inland route was of the utmost importance to the defense of western Canada and Alaska.

ALCAN Highway

In February 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved plans for construction of a military road through Canada to Alaska. The State Department then asked Canada for permission to send two U.S. Army Engineer regiments to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, and two others to Fort St. John, British Columbia. A two-phase construction program was outlined. Because the engineer units could get to work much more quickly, they would build the initial pioneer road. Civilian contractors working for the U.S. Public Roads

Brigadier General William M. Hoge commanded the Alaska Highway effort from February through May 1942 when the project was divided into the northern and southern sectors. (National Archives)

Administration (PRA) would then upgrade this road into a permanent highway. Colonel (later Brigadier General) William Morris Hoge, Corps of Engineers, would command the Canadian–Alaskan Military Highway project, soon to be known simply as the ALCAN (renamed the Alaska Highway in 1943).

While awaiting permission to move engineer units into Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon, planners in Washington were busy. Before the war, an inland route to Alaska had been intensely debated in Canada and the United States. Most of the field surveys and data collected focused on various routes in Alaska and on the preferred coastal options through British Columbia to the Yukon. These studies usually excluded the so-called "prairie" route of Edmonton–Fort St. John–Whitehorse. United States planners eventually chose this route due to its direct rail, road, and air access to the midcontinent and the Japanese threat to the coastal routes.

Because large parts of the area were unexplored, unmapped, and even unknown to local fur trappers and Indians, the initial route planning was done on large-scale 1:250,000 National Geographic Society maps and 1:1,000,000 aeronautical charts, and aerial photographs. At first there were no plans other than the specific requirement to link the airfields already established at Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse in Canada and Northway and Big Delta in Alaska. Built in 1940–41, these airfields made up the Northwest air ferry staging route to American and Canadian forces defending Alaska and western Canada.

The great distances involved, the poor communications and means of transportation, and the very difficult and rugged terrain determined how Hoge organized his construction forces. At first, there were no plans other than to link these airfields with roads. The mountains formed a 7,000-foot natural barrier, so he divided the project at Watson Lake, 600 miles north of Fort St. John, which would house the southern sector's headquarters. Hoge's main headquarters and those of the northern sector were co-located at the Yukon's capital of Whitehorse. This was a sound choice due to its good communications and transportation facilities and its location on the Lewes River, a branch of the extensive Yukon River system. Whitehorse also had an airport, was connected to Carcross and the Alaskan port of Skagway by the narrow-gauge White Pass & Yukon Railroad, and during the navigation season became a bustling river port.

From the very first, the physical separation of the two sectors and the difficulties of travel and communications along the designated route adversely affected Hoge's overall control. In May, the two sectors were completely separated, with Hoge taking over the northern sector and its four engineer regiments, and Colonel (later Brigadier General) James A. "Patsy" O'Connor assuming command of the three regiments then assigned to the southern sector. This division gave Hoge the far tougher and larger assignment—over 830 miles from Watson Lake, just over the British Columbia–Yukon border, to Big Delta, some 90 miles southeast of Fairbanks, plus the 72-mile extension of the Richardson Highway's Slana cutoff to the Tanana River.

On 3 March 1942 Hoge received his construction directive from the Office of the Chief of Engineers (OCE) and left Washington for Fort St. John the next day. This order laid out Hoge's mission and the authorities granted to accomplish it. Hoge was charged with surveys, construction of the pioneer road, and coordination with the PRA for location and construction of the permanent road that its contractors would complete. A 9,200-man provisional engineer brigade was established under Hoge's command with its headquarters at Whitehorse and included the 18th, 35th, 93d, 340th, and 341st Engineer Regiments (the 95th and 97th were added later), the 73d and 74th Engineer Companies (Light Ponton),

In the northern sector of the Alaska Highway, topographic engineer survey teams work with Public Roods Administration crews to mark locations for the clearing crews.

topographic survey companies from the 29th Engineer Topographic Battalion in the north and from the 648th Engineer Topographic Battalion in the south, and numerous attached units. The two light ponton companies were critical to success because, after the thaw and before bridges were built, their ponton ferries and floating bridges would be the only means of moving men and heavy equipment across the many formidable rivers and streams that crisscrossed the proposed route.

Of the many problems Hoge faced in February-March 1942, one of the first and most critical was where and how to place the engineer regiments astride the proposed road. The short construction season demanded haste, so it was important to get as many units working as soon as possible. After analyzing the problem, Hoge decided to use the few access points available-the north and south ends, Whitehorse, and Lake Teslin via Whitehorse-to break the road into digestible segments.

Two regiments-the 18th Engineer Regiment (Combat) (Lieutenant Colonel E. G. Paules) and, cadred from it, the 340th Engineer Regiment (General Service) (Lieutenant Colonel F. Russel Lyons)-were slated for Whitehorse. One regiment could work southeast toward the two units working from Fort St. John, and the other northwest toward Alaska.

The 18th Engineers began working north from Whitehorse in late April 1942. The conditions on the cleared but ungraded and unfinished road hampered the movement of men, equipment, and supplies (National Archives)

By mid-March, however,. Hoge concluded that four regiments were insufficient to complete the pioneer road in 1942. The deficiency was especially critical in the north. From Whitehorse to Big Delta, the road would run over 560 miles, and it was over 325 miles from Whitehorse to Lower Post near Watson Lake.

Thus, Hoge requested additional general service regiments and eventually received the black 93d, 95th, and 97th General Service Regiments after they were reequipped and upgraded from separate labor battalions. The 93d (Colonel Frank M.S. Johnson) was ordered to Whitehorse via Skagway and would work southward on the Whitehorse-Teslin sector. This allowed the 340th to skip farther south to begin work on the Teslin-Lower Post sector.

The 97th (Colonel Stephen C. Whipple) would land at Valdez, Alaska, in mid-May. While PRA contractors would eventually tackle the 119 miles of road southeast from the Richardson Highway at Big Delta to Tok Junction, the 97th Engineers would build the connector road from Slana to Tok Junction at the confluence of the Tok and Tanana rivers and then head southeast to join the 18th Engineers. A third black regiment, the 95th Engineer Regiment (General Service) (Colonel David L. Neumann), was added in April and

scheduled to arrive at Fort St. John early in June to work north toward Fort Nelson with the 341st Engineers (Colonel Albert L. Lane).

One of the two regiments going to Fort St. John had to move 250 miles north to Fort Nelson so it could build toward Watson Lake after the spring thaw. If it could not be moved, the mountainous 900-mile gap between Fort St. John and Whitehorse could never be conquered in a single working season. Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Ingalls' 35th Engineer Regiment (Combat), along with the attached 74th Light Ponton Company and topographic companies, had to reach Fort Nelson before the winter snow-sled road from Dawson Creek turned to impassable muck.

Hoge's greatest worry was getting the regiment, with all of its heavy equipment and sufficient supplies, across the unbridged 1,800-foot-wide Peace River south of Fort St. John while the river ice could still support traffic. With the thaw, floating river ice would prevent the use of ponton ferries and floating bridges and retard any northward movement for several months. The movement of the 341st Engineer Regiment, which was then being formed from a cadre of the 35th, was not rushed.

Quartermaster and engineer supply officers were soon scouring western Canada for petroleum products and haulers to move them to Fort Nelson. The 35th had to carry 150 days of equipment, supplies, and spare parts, as well as 60 days of rations because Fort Nelson would only be accessible by air for some time after the thaw. Trainloads of equipment began arriving at Dawson Creek on 5 March. Five days later, the first elements of the 35th Engineers detrained at Dawson Creek for their 300-mile journey to Fort Nelson.

The engineers first insulated the Peace River crossing against sudden warming with a thick layer of sawdust and then reinforced it with heavy wooden planks. By late March 1,900 officers and men; over 900 tons of supplies and equipment; 429,000 imperial gallons of oil products; and carryalls, graders, power shovels, compressors, trucks, and ten 23-ton Caterpillar D-8 tractors had crossed the river and were trekking north toward Fort Nelson in temperatures as low as -35°F. On 5 April the last elements reached Fort Nelson.

Hoge ranked the crossing of the Peace River and the winter march of the 35th Engineers among his most critical achievements. The project could then be sliced into six segments of roughly 250–300 miles each, which could be built separately and simultaneously. If the 35th had not reached Fort Nelson, the road could not have been finished in 1942.

As Hoge prepared his units to assault the Canadian wilderness, in Washington Army planners in the Services of Supply (SOS) were addressing a critical unanswered problem —how to provide sufficient fuel at an economical cost for the trucks that would use the completed ALCAN Highway and for the aircraft transiting the Northwest air ferry staging route. In May, Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell, the SOS commander, approved an entirely new engineer effort for the Canadian north—the grandiose, controversial, and costly Canadian Oil (CANOL) project. CANOL included oil wells at Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories, a 500-mile pipeline to Whitehorse, a refinery at Whitehorse transplanted from Texas, and various pipelines radiating from the refinery to Skagway and along the ALCAN to support trucking and aircraft operations as well as bases in Alaska.

During March and April, Washington's plans for the future supply of petroleum products from CANOL were of little importance to engineers who were confronting critical problems in route location as well as in construction planning and management. Much of Hoge's trouble arose because the project involved two separate federal agencies, the Corps of Engineers and the Public Roads Administration, each of which had separate chains of command from Washington to the project.

Through the first months, Hoge made little headway in locating the pioneer road in the more inaccessible areas. The lack of adequate maps and aerial photography until late June, combined with a paucity of detailed route information, especially about the rugged 640-mile section from Fort Nelson to Whitehorse that crossed the Rockies, equaled little success on route location. The surveys of the Alaskan International Highway Commission and the Alaska Highway Commission provided detailed routes between Big Delta and Whitehorse, but frequent public criticism of the ALCAN's route by Thomas Riggs and Donald MacDonald of the International

The 18th Engineers build a timber bridge across the Raspberry River north of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, May 1942.

Commission forced restudies and delayed final location decisions on even these routes for several months.

To the south, placement between Fort St. John and Fort Nelson progressed little during March and into April because there were no planes for aerial surveys. As a result, Hoge and locating teams guessed about possible routes based on available information. Hoge finally hired Les Cook, a Canadian bush pilot from Whitehorse, to fly him and his key officers to search out locations for the road.

Hoge's rides with Les Cook broke the logjam. From Les Cook, Bill Hoge learned the secrets that allowed him to drive the road through the largely uncharted region. Les Cook pointed out the best crossing of the Rockies, 96 miles east of Teslin and 195 miles from Whitehorse with a summit of 3,100 feet. This route was unknown to local inhabitants, but its discovery through aerial reconnaissance was a key to the early completion of the highway. Lieutenant Colonel Reinder Schilsky of the 340th Engineers followed up this lead with a ground survey which firmly established the route from Teslin Lake to Watson Lake. By early June, the biggest question mark on this section of the road was erased.

Weather and ground conditions often prevented detailed ground reconnaissances. On the northern sector, 12 PRA

The Caterpillar D-8 bulldozer allowed engineer regiments to clear, cut, fill, and grade the pioneer road faster than had been planned.

locating teams worked southeast and northwest from Whitehorse with detachments of Major Frank Pettit's topographic survey company from the 29th Topographic Battalion. All of the teams desperately needed aerial photographs, but photographic planes were not to begin operating effectively until June. Even then the negatives had to be flown to Seattle for developing because the proper equipment was lacking. Only in July did the locating teams have aerial photos.

Ground and aerial reconnaissances continued on all sections throughout the summer, but the engineer clearing crews and their D-8s were right on the heels of the marking teams. Efforts to place the pioneer and permanent roads in close proximity ended when the PRA locating parties could not provide detailed survey information far enough in advance of the clearing parties to prevent delays. The Army engineers worked against a tight deadline dictated by the seasons and an equally tight set of specifications and orders on the kind of road they were to build. The final decision on location of the pioneer road and its specifications always remained the prerogative of the sector commander. The real culprit in the location problem was the 23-ton D-8 bulldozer which allowed the engineer clearing teams to push ahead so much more rapidly than anyone thought possible in the spring.

During a visit to Anchorage while he was still in overall command of the project, Bill Hoge was asked how he was going to build the road. He answered, "with six machines of 1,000 men each"—his engineer regiments. On the Whitehorse sector, after May, Hoge had two white regiments, the 18th and 340th, and two black regiments, the 93d and 97th. However, the 93d and 340th sat in Skagway and the 18th worked slowly north from Whitehorse through April and into mid-May awaiting the arrival of their heavy equipment that was stalled in Seattle.

Upon receiving its equipment, the 93d moved to Carcross from whence it built an access road east to Jake's Corner and then worked its way across heavily wooded terrain toward the Teslin River. The 50-mile sector from Whitehorse south to Jake's Corner was left for the PRA's civilian contractors. While the 340th's personnel leap-frogged the 93d, its heavy equipment was shipped via the Yukon and Teslin rivers and Teslin Lake to Teslin. From there, it began building toward Watson Lake and Lower Post on the Liard River, 188 miles to the east, to link up with the 35th that was working to the west and then northwest on its 337-mile leg from Fort Nelson. The 97th landed at Valdez in mid-May and began working from Slana in mid-June.

The 18th Engineer Regiment arrived at Whitehorse in early April. Despite a lack of heavy equipment, the 18th went to work north of the city with small D-4 tractors, fresnoes, and hand tools, and set up a training school for D-8 operators for itself and the 93d and 340th Engineers. In a pattern that all units on the road would follow, after April the 18th Engineers lived in tents, moved constantly (174 major moves in 10 months), and worked three 8-hour shifts, seven days a week. The soldiers cursed the endless sub-Arctic summer nights that permitted such work schedules, the voracious horse-sized mosquitoes and flies, monotonous Army B-rations, and the lack of supplies and spare parts. Yet they steadily pushed their camps and roads forward toward the Alaska border.

Each regiment organized itself differently for road work. The three platoons of each company provided a structure readily adapted to three-shift operations. Two basic approaches were used—leap-frogging and the "train." In the

former, a company was assigned a specific sector of 5 to 15 miles behind the D-8s of a clearing task force. Working as fast as it could, living in tents, and fully mobile, the company would complete all the work on that particular sector from clearing away timber to placing culverts and grading the road. As it prepared this section, the companies that it had leap-frogged would finish their sections and move ahead to new sections. When the company was finished, it leap-frogged to the front of the column again, and the process started all over.

In the train method, the regiment was broken up into companies that were assigned to specific tasks—the clearing crew, then the company which built log culverts and small bridges, followed by the ditching and rough grading crew, which also placed corduroy if necessary. Then came the rest of the regiment strung out over 30–40 miles of road widening, graveling, smoothing, and cutting grades and curves.

With only four good months in the construction season, no one worried about the subtleties of normal road building. The engineers' job was to complete the pioneer road as fast as possible. No time could be wasted for carefully constructed subcourses, gentle curves, or easy inclines.

In the north, Hoge was continuously on the go. He personally tested the radii of the curves until he was sure that the trucks and equipment could get around them without backing up. He emphasized that the job had to be done quickly. Sophistication would come with the PRA's permanent road. Hoge was once quoted as telling a subordinate: "Your road is too good, too wide, and too short."

Hoge's approach to construction was simple and direct. Early on he had declared the standard for clearing to be 50 feet on either side of the center line, with a road surface 18 feet wide, 5-foot shoulders, maximum grades of 10 degrees, and easy curves. The key to Hoge's plan was his heavy equipment, the air compressors and power tools, motor graders, scrapers, and especially the D-8s, which had three basic functions—clearing, cutting and filling, and grading the pioneer road. Once a suitable number of the big "Cats" were on line—and each regiment eventually had 20 of them to team with its 24 medium D-4s—10 to 12 D-8s could clear 2 to 3 miles of 100-foot right-of-way through solid forest in

Timber box culverts were used in great numbers along the Alaska Highway Timber was plentiful and used generously for every possible application.

a day. So successful were these clearing teams that they were soon on top of the location and staking teams. Because of this, engineer and PRA coordination on route location was foreclosed, with unfortunate consequences.

Despite rainy weather in May and June and continuing deficiencies in equipment and supplies throughout the summer, the engineer regiments steadily drove their pioneer roads into the Canadian wilderness. By early June over 10,000 Army personnel were at work along the road-O'Connor's southern sector had 4,354 officers and men in its three engineer regiments and attached units while Hoge's four regiments had 5,806 officers and men. Few obstacles slowed construction except the major water courses, such as Slim's River, which required the 18th Engineers to build a 1,040-foot pile stringer bridge and the 340th's bridge over the Rancheria River. The effort expended on bridges and culverts was significant—in the 95 miles from the Aishihik River to Kluane Lake, the 18th Engineers built 25 stringer bridges, an A-frame at Aishihik, 2 pile stringer bridges, and 138 timber box culverts. Luckily, timber was never in short supply.

Road Construction May-July 1942 (cumulative total in miles)			
	Located	Completed	Under Construction
Northern Sector			
May	78	24	30
June	293	161	87
July	480	353	98
Southern Sector			
May	75	28	21
June	177	84	28
July	378	258	85
Total by end of July	**858**	**611**	**183**

Alaska Highway road construction: May–July 1942.

Local construction experts repeatedly warned Hoge that muskeg—basically soggy peat bogs—would seriously curtail his progress. However, careful location of the road away from muskeg, where possible, or clearing and allowing the muskeg to dry out usually overcame this problem.

While clearing and drying may have worked with muskeg, it was absolutely the wrong approach for the permanently frozen subsoil, or permafrost, that lurked beneath the surface on large stretches of the route in the north. Isolated trouble spots first appeared on sections of road that the 18th Engineers were clearing around Kluane Lake north of Whitehorse. Dry and passable one day, the next day they were muddy and impassable.

No sooner had the 18th Engineers mastered this area than both it and the 340th to the south ran into extensive stretches of permafrost. Progress plummeted to less than a mile a day during August and into September as axes, shovels, and musclepower replaced the D-8's steel and horsepower. Hoge's swath-cutting technique was completely wrong.

Engineers attempt to undo the damage of permafrost on the southern sector of the Alaska Highway. When clearing crews ripped off the vegetation that insulated the forzen ground, the resulting ooze hampered work.

The D-8s simply ripped the vegetation cover off of the permafrost, thus accelerating the melting and creating the muddy areas. Rather than bulldoze a path through the timber and scrub, the units now had to cut the timber by hand, make a corduroy mat of timber and branches, and then cover this mat with gravel and dirt to insulate the permafrost. Only then could they resume building the road on top of the corduroy insulating blanket.

The proper techniques for construction in Arctic and sub-Arctic permafrost areas were then known to few engineers in the United States. Laboratories such as the Corps' Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) would not come into existence until years later to search for solutions to problems such as those faced and solved by trial and error every day during the construction of the Alaska Highway.

By midsummer of 1942, the Engineers were building a road of a much higher standard and much more quickly than envisioned in the original plans. The pioneer road was really a well-graded and drained two-way road for most of its distance, not the one-way access road suitable only for the use and supply of the troops. The PRA contractors, who were to build the permanent road, had progressed little beyond

Corduroy roads, such as this one built by the 93d Engineers near Little Atlin Lake Yukon Territory, were necessary in boggy areas and to cover permafrost sections to prevent thawing.

establishing their camps, gathering equipment, and initiating work. It now appeared likely that the road would be ready to Fort Nelson by 15 September and to Watson Lake and Northway by 1 December. Winter traffic to Alaska could use the road from 1 December through the spring thaw of 1943 once sufficient support facilities and services could be established.

By early August, however, another factor in Washington affected the OCE's increasingly militant approach to work on the highway OCE reminded O'Connor and Hoge that their jobs were to build a pioneer road and to reach agreement with the PRA if possible, and if not, to refer the decision to Washington. General Somervell was especially sensitive to renewed public criticism of route selection and construction, but this was especially bothersome one month after House and Senate investigations of the ALCAN project.

Based on OCE's latest directives, both Hoge and O'Connor issued new construction instructions to the 430 engineer officers and 10,100 enlisted men who were now working along the road. By late August, 525 miles had been completed in the north and another 116 miles were in progress, 312 miles were usable, and 233 miles were being built between Fort St. John and Watson Lake. However, in a major reorganization

at the end of August, Bill Hoge was relieved of command of the northern sector and both sectors were combined under O'Connor.

The early completion of the pioneer road, the continuing criticism and congressional inquiries about the route selection, and Somervell's own plans prompted his visits to Canada and Alaska from 17 to 22 August. He was probably more concerned about his pet Canadian Oil (CANOL) project than the highway, but the two were increasingly intertwined now that the highway neared completion. Petroleum products from the CANOL refinery at Whitehorse were essential for the economical and efficient operation of Army trucking operations on the long haul from Edmonton to Alaska and for aviation operations along the staging route.

When Somervell arrived in the Whitehorse sector after a brief stop with O'Connor, he found plenty to dislike about Hoge's operation. After looking over the congested and uncomfortable Whitehorse for two days, Somervell decided things were a mess. The White Pass & Yukon Railroad to Skagway, the housing, and supplies were all inadequate, and Hoge's whole concept and operation were unacceptable.

Removal of Bill Hoge stemmed more from Somervell's personal animosity and grandiose plans than from any substantive reason or lack of performance. Hoge survived his firing and went on to hold a number of important commands during and after World War II, retiring in 1955 with rank of full general as Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Europe, the American ground component of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On 4 September, Somervell established the Northwest Service Command to preside over his new empire in the northwest, including CANOL and the services supporting the soon-to-be-opened highway from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks. The men, material, supplies, equipment, and support for which Hoge had fought so hard were lavished upon O'Connor's new command in the months to come.

The road from Fort St. John to Whitehorse was completed on 24 September when the 340th and 35th Engineers met, and that section through to Alaska was passable when the leading D-8s of the 97th and 18th Engineers finally met on 25 October at Beaver Creek, a few miles shy of the Alaska

The meeting of the bulldozers at Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, 25 October 1942 (left: Corporal Refines Sims, Jr., 97th Engineers; right: Private Alfred Jalufka, 18th Engineers).

border. The Alaska Highway was officially opened to U.S. Army truck traffic in a Canadian-American ceremony at Soldier's Summit on the west shore of Kluane Lake on 20 November 1942. The first truck from Dawson Creek reached Fairbanks the next day.

With roadside service facilities and communications established, Army truck traffic moved between Dawson Creek and Fairbanks and to all points in between during the winter of 1942-43. The 18th and 93d Engineers left the road in January 1943, and the 35th, 95th, 97th Regiments and the 73d Light Ponton Company departed in February. The 340th and 341st Regiments and the 74th Light Ponton Company remained well into 1943 to assist the PRA contractors who went to work that spring straightening and improving the previous year's pioneer road and putting in permanent bridges. Army Engineers assigned to the Northwest Service Command's Northwest Engineer Division and its various districts then managed the CANOL project and its pipelines (fully operational in April 1944), added the Haines cut-off in

Sector Responsibilities
(mileage as built)

Regiment	Sector	Mileage
341/95 EGSR	Fort St. John — Fort Nelson	256
35 ECR	Fort Nelson — Lower Post	337
340 EGSR	Lower Post — Teslin	188
93 EGSR	Teslin — Jake's Corner Jake's Corner — Carcross	62 35
PRA	Jake's Corner — Whitehorse	54
18 ECR	Whitehorse — Beaver Creek	298
97 EGSR	Beaver Creek — Tok Junction Slana Cutoff	122 72
PRA	Tok Junction — Big Delta	119
Total Built	**Fort St. John — Big Delta**	**1,543**
Already Completed	Dawson Creek — Fort St. John Big Delta — Fairbanks	48 94
Total	**Dawson Creek — Fairbanks**	**1,685**

EGSR = Engineer General Service Regiment
ECG = Engineer Combat Regiment
PRA = Public Roads Administration

Alaska Highway sector responsibilities.

1943–44, and oversaw maintenance and improvement of the Alaska Highway until 1946 when the Canadian government assumed full responsibility.

Today the Alaska Highway is a vital and vibrant commercial artery that supports the settlement, development, and well-being of northern British Columbia, the Yukon, and much of Alaska. As such, the highway is a permanent memorial to the seven "machines of 1,000 men each" and thousands of other U.S. and Canadian soldiers and civilians who built this road through uncharted wilderness in seven short months in 1942.

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